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A CHARM TO PROTECT A TOWN

THE tradition that a Lydian king tried to make the citadel of Sardes The impregnable by carrying round it a lion¹ may perhaps be illustrated Bechuanas by a South African custom. When the Bechuanas are about to {jf^ofa found a new town, they observe an elaborate ritual They choose sacrificial a bull from the herd, sew up its eyelids with sinew, and then allow ^{ox at} . the blinded animal to wander at will for four days. On the fifth ^ to^ n? day they track it down and sacrifice it at sunset on the spot where it happens to be standing. The carcase is then roasted whole and divided among the people. Ritual requires that every particle of the flesh should be consumed on the spot. When the sacrificial meal is over, the medicine-men take the hide and mark it with appropriate medicines, the composition of which is a professional secret. Then with one long spiral cut they convert the whole hide into a single thong. Having done so they cut up the thong into lengths of about two feet and despatch messengers in all directions to peg down one of those strips in each of the paths leading to the new town. " After this," it is said, " if a foreigner approaches the new town to destroy it with his charms, he will find that the town has prepared itself for his coming." ² Thus it would seem that the pastoral Bechuanas attempt to place a new town under the protection of one of their sacred cattle³ by distributing pieces of its hide at all points where an enemy could approach it, just as the Lydian king thought to place the citadel of his capital under the protection of the lion-god by carrying the animal round the boundaries. Further, the Bechuana custom may throw light on a widespread The cus- legend^{cl} which relates how a wily settler in a new country bought j ^™ ^15" from the natives as much land as could be covered with a hide, and the legend how he then proceeded to cut the hide into thongs and to claim of the as much land as could be enclosed by the thongs. It was thus, ^'

¹ See above, vol. i, p. 184.

³ For more evidence of the sanctity ^{and}

similar

² Rev. W. C. Willoughby, "Notes of cattle among the Bechuanas see the ^{tales} on the Totcmism of the Bcwana," Rev. W. C. Willoughby,

op. cit. pp.
Journal of the Anthropological Institute, 301 *sqq.*
xxxv. (1905) pp. 303 *sq.*